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ABSTRACT

Evaluating and offering assistance to school prinicpals is a school district responsibility that is not being adequately performed in many cases. Organizational goals will be greatly enhanced when districts become committed to evaluating and providing staff development for principals to enhance personal and professional skills. This paper addresses three questions that must be considered in order to effectively integrate evaluative procedures with staff development: (1) What is the current state of the art of evaluation for administrators? (2) How can a staff development process and evaluation process be integrated into one system? (3) Once integrated, how does the system work? (JD)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT: THE MISSING LINK IN ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION

by

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Occasional Paper No. 13

A fourth-year principal looked up from his desk on a March afternoon to see his immediate supervisor standing at the office door with a grave expression on his face. He walked in, closed the door, sat down and said, "Earl, I just cannot recommend your continued role as a principal in this school district." Earl was not really surprised. He knew he had not been perceived by his supervisors as effective. But Earl was angry. Only once in his four years had any supervisor conferenced with him in a formal evaluation, and he had received no written feedback concerning his evaluation. Never had anyone pointed out a specific weakness or offered assistance.

Is evaluating and offering assistance a school district's responsibility? The answer to this question should be a resounding yes! Learning, growing, changing and improving does not stop when "principal" is tacked on to the end of a name. Organizational goals will be greatly enhanced when districts become committed to evaluating and providing staff development for principals to enhance personal and professional skills.

Personnel evaluation has been defined as a process of review to assess individual performance and to make a value judgment concerning this assessment for the benefit of both the individual and the organization.[1] Staff development is a process of fostering personal and professional growth for individuals in order to produce continuous, responsible self-renewal for educators and schools.[2] If these two processes can be integrated

into one continuous cycle, school districts can responsibly assist administrators in attaining high levels of success.

To effectively integrate evaluative procedures with staff development, three questions must be addressed: (1) What is the current state of the art of evaluation for administrators? (2) How can a staff development process and evaluation process be integrated into one system? and, (3) Once integrated, how does the system work?

Current State of Evaluation for Administrators

An Educational Research Survey identified twelve basic types of evaluative procedures used in eighty-four school systems with enrollments of 25,000 or more students.[3] The twelve types were compiled into two categories:

(1) Lists of job performance standards.

(2) Job performance goals relating the evaluatee to major areas of responsibility.

Of the eighty-four systems, sixty-five used a checklist approach. In the same study, forty-six percent of all districts surveyed did not formally evaluate administrators.[4]

Another study conducted on a state and national level revealed a similar finding: Administrators have seldom been evaluated either on their own performances or on the performance of their school districts.[5] A side comment in the study subtly implied the need for a closer relationship between evaluation and staff development. "The infrequent occurrence of matching intent to outcomes in the evaluative process provides little encouragement for administrators improvement.[6]" Improvement is the intended outcome of staff development.

The American Association of School Administrators resolved in 1977 that "...superintendents and other administrators should assume responsibility for evaluating all other administrators."[7] In the late seventies, several states took positions supporting the evaluation of administrators, and several mandated evaluation through state legislation.

In summary, a survey of available information relating to administrator evaluation reveals several points: (1) Although much has been written about the evaluation of administrators, little has been done in a formal sense; (2) most formal administrator evaluations have consisted of checklists of performance standards; (3) Recognizing the need for improved evaluation of school administrators, state education agencies, state legislatures and professional administrator organizations have asserted leadership roles in making the evaluative process of administrators become a reality; (4) Finally, although there are obviously related concepts, virtually nothing is being done to integrate the two processes of evaluation and staff development into a total system. How can this be done?

Evaluation and Staff Development: One System

The predominant flaw in most staff development programs has been addressed by Ehrenburg and Brandt:

> Most staff development programs are cases in point. They consist of a little of this and a little of that, a workshop here and a college course there--none of which is systematically related to a cumulative plan designed to help students achieve learning objectives. And if staff development programs cannot demonstrate how they can contribute to achieving specified student goals, then there is no reason for spending time and money on them.[8]

Whether considering student goals, administrator goals, building goals, or program goals, the basis of everything that is planned in a school district should be the attainment of the overall educational goals of the district. This can be systematically accomplished through evaluation.

Evaluation should guide and counsel the administrator rather than "check up" on him or her.[9] Evaluation is different from examination. Evaluation involves seeking information and providing interaction as a basis for judgment.[10] Most evaluative processes provide for feedback, whether they involve checklists of job performance standards or the setting of performance goals. At some point, the person who evaluates must tell the person being evaluated <u>something</u>. This feedback stage should be the logical place for planning follow-up activities. Follow-up implies several things. It implies mutual judgments, future actions, and reassessment. It suggests a process for fostering individual improvement. Feedback is the beginning of the staff development phase of the evaluation process. Staff development activities, according to Harris, should afford opportunities to obtain information relating to a particular competency, provide practice with the various parts of sub-competencies involved, and give indicators of the level of performance obtained.[11] Harris has termed staff development activities with these characteristics "guided practice" and maintains they have "high experience impact" causing them to be most useful for skills associated with complex tasks such as administration.[12]

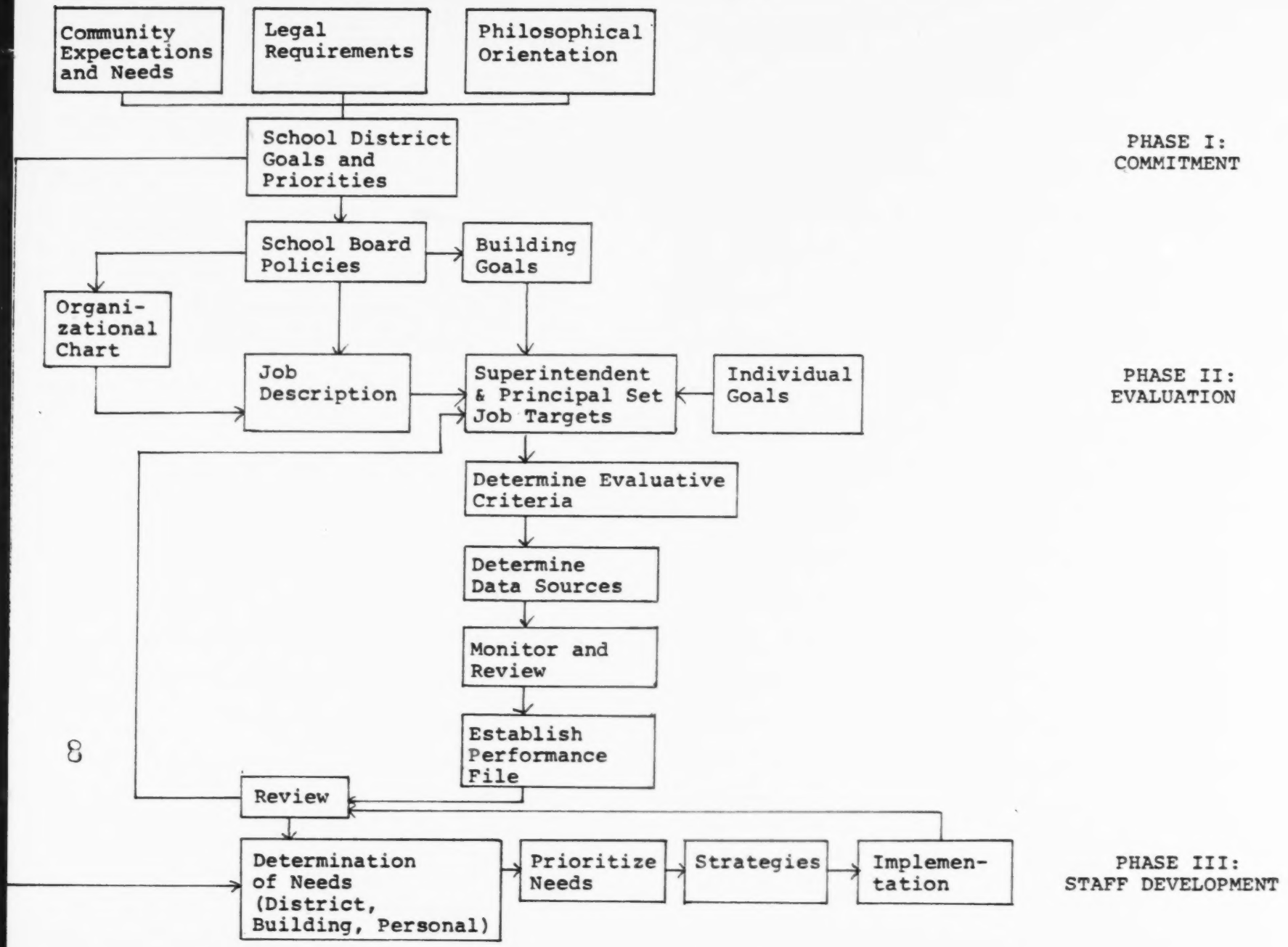
The logic of incorporating staff development into the feedback phase of an evaluation model is obvious, and it can be done rather easily!!

Making the System Work

A three-phase system for incorporating evaluation and staff development is illustrated in Figure 1. The first phase is the Commitment Phase which includes the School Board's philosophy and goals. From these goals, Board policies are developed and job descriptions are written. An organizational chart indicating the arrangement of the administrative staff shows how the members of the organization accomplish the goals of the organization. Of prime importance, however, is that commitment to evaluation and staff development be based on the philosophy and goals of the school district. Endorsement of administrative staff development by a school board will normally lead to fiscal support; the setting aside of district resources such as money, time, space, and materials to be used to upgrade the knowledge and skills of administrators.

Phase two of the system is the Evaluation Phase. In the Evaluation Phase, an initial conference is held between the evaluator (possibly the superintendent), and the individual administrator being evaluated (the building principal). Three sources of input are considered during this conference. One source is the principal's job description which is composed of job responsibilities and performance standards. Another source is district goals and policies which may be translated into building goals. The principal, as the

FIGURE I: Integrated Model for Evaluation and Staff Development



building manager and instructional leader, would be responsible for seeing that those goals are achieved, and should be evaluated on that achievement. The third source of input is individual goals. Utilizing individual goals in the evaluation process allows the school principal the opportunity to identify particular areas where he or she wants to grow.

With input from these three sources, the superintendent and principal jointly set job targets and determine how those job targets will be evaluated. A period of time for adequate monitoring and review is allowed and an end-of-cycle review conference is held. At this point, the system enters phase three.

Phase three is the Staff Development Phase. The end-of-cycle review conference may reveal some staff development needs to be addressed at the individual level, the building level, or even the district level. In order for well-planned staff development to occur, three steps must be followed: (1) needs (district, building, or personal) should be identified; and (2) prioritized strategies for meeting needs should be determined and implemented; and (3) finally, the effectiveness of strategies should be evaluated. Too often, staff development programs consist exclusively of information-giving rather than providing for a combination of information-giving and skill development. The unfortunate result is program participants who can talk about skills that they may not be able to practice. As Ehrenburg and Brandt so aptly phrase it: "It has been assumed for too long that if persons can talk about teaching or administration, they are therefore competent teachers of administrators."[13] Nothing, of course, could be

further from the truth. The three-step process in the foregoing forces the staff development phase to feed back into the evaluation phase.

A Final Perspective

While not yet a common occurrence, formal evaluation of school administrators is gathering strength as a result of repeated demands for accountability in the total educational program. Support is evident for administrator evaluation from state agencies, state legislatures, and professional organizations.

Staff development activities have also not been systematically available for school administrators in many districts.[14] Traditional methods of job improvement have included additional university work, job mobility, and professional travel. The flood of young administrators with advanced degrees, declining enrollments, and high costs combined with diminishing funds, are systematically eliminating the possibilities of such methods.

A carefully planned, systamatically delivered staff development program which is supported by, and in turn supports the district's formal evaluation process, is a necessity for the continuous improvement of school principals. Adherence to this concept should foster positive relationships between the evaluator and evaluatee, and should promote the success of the individual and the organization in satisfying the educational needs of the community. No school administrator should have to suffer an arbitrary dismissal based on informal evaluation without adequate assistance for improvement. Likewise, no district

should succumb to a routine shuffling of staff to avoid the task of improving the individual in the job he or she has to do. Improving an individual's role performance is tough and time-consuming, but it is a responsibility that cannot be ignored.

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